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The Translation of the Record - Martin Harris as Amanuesis

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CHAPTER V.

THE TRANSLATION OF THE RECORD.—MARTIN HARRIS AS AMANUENSIS.

Following the account of how Joseph Smith obtained the Book of Mormon it should be known how he translated it, and what difficulties attended that work. I would remind the reader in passing that I am to deal with a remarkable narrative, one in which strange things occur, and one in which many who deny or doubt the power of God will be inclined to have little faith. To such I would say, judge nothing hastily, dismiss nothing petulantly, patient investigation, and sometimes suspension of judgment in relation to matters difficult of belief are necessary to the ascertainment of truth, and in such manner wise men, anxious to know the truth, proceed.

The Prophet, in his narrative, quoted in the preceding chapter, tells us that he soon found out the reason why he had received such a strict injunction to carefully guard the Nephite record and the Urim and Thummim and why it was that Moroni had said that after he (Joseph) had done what was required at his hands he (Moroni) would call for them. "For no sooner was it known," says Joseph, "that I had them, [the Nephite plates] than the most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me; every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose; the persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible."^a

^aHist. of the Church, Vol. I, p. 18.

Rumor, with her thousand tongues, he informs us, was all the time employed circulating tales about his father's family, and about himself; and doubtless much of that misrepresentation which followed the prophet and his father's family throughout his life had its origin about this time.

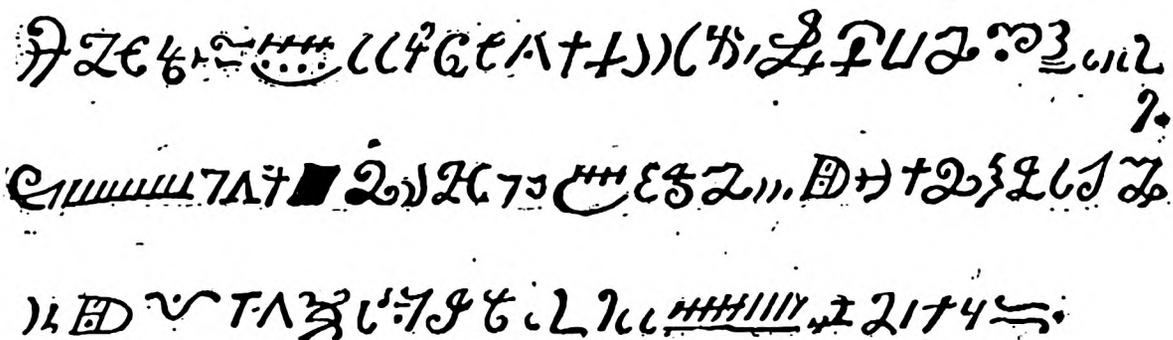
So intolerable at last became the persecution about Manchester that Joseph decided to move with his wife to the home of her parents in Harmony, Susequehannah county, Pennsylvania. Susequehanna county is one of the northern counties of Pennsylvania, and joins Broome county, in the state of New York; and Harmony is a distance of from one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles from Manchester, New York. The young Prophet was in very straightened circumstances when he resolved upon removing to Pennsylvania; but about that time a Mr. Martin Harris, a respectable and well-to-do farmer of Palmyra, New York, called upon the Smith family and gave Joseph fifty dollars to enable him to make the proposed journey. A team and wagon was fitted out and in company with his wife the Prophet started for Pennsylvania. Enroute he was twice stopped by officers of the law, who, under the power of a search warrant, ransacked his wagon in search of the plates, but in each case they were disappointed, as they did not find them, though the prophet had them concealed among his effects.

Arriving in Pennsylvania in the month of December, the Prophet began an examination of the characters engraven upon the plates and copied a considerable number of them; and some of them he translated by means of the Urim and Thummim. In this desultory work he spent the time until the month of February, 1828, when Martin Harris, the gentleman who had befriended him on the eve of his departure from Manchester, arrived at his home in Harmony. This

man had become interested in the Prophet and his work and believed him to be in possession of the plates.

Some of the characters which Joseph had copied from the plates, Martin Harris determined to submit to Professor Charles Anthon, "a gentleman of the highest reputation, both in America and Europe, and well known for his valuable and correct edition of the classics."^b For this purpose Harris made the journey from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to the city of New York. Some of the Nephite characters given into the custody of Mr. Harris were translated while others were not. Following is a fac simile of some of the characters handed to Professor Anthon in fulfillment of the words of Isaiah:

"The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to one that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee, and he saith I am not learned." (Isaiah xxix: 11, 12.)



The image shows three lines of fac simile Nephite characters. The first line consists of approximately 15 characters, including some that resemble the letters 'A', 'Z', 'E', 'G', 'L', 'A', 'T', 'I', 'N', 'S', 'P', 'U', 'B', 'L', 'I', 'C', 'I', 'T', 'Y'. The second line is a continuous string of about 20 characters, many of which are highly stylized and resemble the letters 'E', 'S', 'T', 'I', 'M', 'U', 'S', 'D', 'E', 'I', 'T', 'A', 'T', 'I', 'O', 'N', 'E', 'M'. The third line contains about 15 characters, including some that resemble 'I', 'D', 'E', 'U', 'M', 'T', 'A', 'B', 'U', 'L', 'A', 'T', 'I', 'O', 'N', 'E', 'M'.

Whether or not these are the characters to which a translation was appended by the Prophet, cannot now be determined.

^bThis upon the authority of Samuel M. Smucker, author of a "History of the Mormons," p. 37.—Hurst & Co., N. Y.

^cThis fac simile of Nephite characters is copied from "The Prophet" of December 21st, 1844 (Vol. I., No. 31.)

With the printer's copy of the manuscript of the Book of Mormon, now (1903) in the hands of the descendants of David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses, is also a transcript of characters consisting of seven lines, the first three of which are very similar to those copied from *The Prophet*. They were also handed, it is claimed, to Doctor Mitchell and Professor Anthon by Martin Harris. Whether this seven line transcript was the translated or untranslated part of the characters handed to these learned men for their inspection may not now be determined; but I present them herewith in order that as many of the Nephite characters as have been transcribed from the plates may be before the reader:

Characters

H. H. 4 c  (L 4 6 t A + 1))C 8-1 4 I L 2 (3 2 1)
 5  7 A T ■ 2) 4 C M Y 8 3 2 7 . 4 7 2 } 4 2
) . V T A 3' 6 5 3 4 T (L 2 0 6  0 # : 2 0 2 1 + 2
 0 7 1 5 . . 4 7 1 7) M  2 2) 6 3 2 4 H 1 9 .
 4)) (0 3 5 5 1 +) 4  8 4 2 -) ~ " * 3 3 3) - 2 6 5 + + A - P 2 L
 7 5 (-) 4 c { 3 - + A + 4 - - ■  1 2 - 3 7 2 .. 6 () - 4 4 + 2 - 5 5 2
 ■  4 2 - 5 5 3 - = + 6 6 1 1 3 3 3 5 5 - 1 * 4 3 - 2 2 2 4 - 5 5 6 4 4 2 2 - 2 2 5 2 7 1

The latter transcript is taken from a pamphlet by the late Elder Edward Stevenson, of the First Council of Seventy, entitled "Reminiscences of Joseph the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon." Of this transcript Elder Stevenson says:

"I will vouch for the correctness of the characters, as I have compared them with the original copy, which is still in existence, intact, just as it was when Martin Harris, as a messenger, took it with the translation Joseph Smith had made, to Professor An-

thon of New York. The copy here presented was traced from the original copy, and is an exact reproduction of it."^d

Of both these transcripts it should be said that doubtless inaccuracies exist in them, for the reason that the Prophet who made the fac simile was unskillful in such work, but for all that the fac simile of the characters will be of interest and may be of very great importance yet as evidence for the truth of the claims of the Book of Mormon.

On the return of Martin Harris to Harmony, he made the following statement to Joseph Smith as to what took place between himself and Professor Anthon:

"I went to the city of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments. Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian.^e I then showed him those which were not

^dStevenson's "Reminiscences," p. 33.

^eThe writer is of the opinion that there is in this statement too wide a scope given to what Professor Anthon said of the translation of the Egyptian-Nephite characters. Of course in the transcripts the professor would doubtless recognize some Egyptian characters of the hieratic Egyptian, and in the translation would also find a right interpretation of those characters, as it will be seen by his letters, quoted later in the body of the work, he acknowledges that the characters submitted to him were true characters, but beyond this I do not think he could give confirmation as to the correctness of the translation; for, according to the writers of the Book of Mormon, they had changed somewhat the characters in both languages in which they made records, both in the Egyptian, and also in the Hebrew (See Mormon ix:32, 43); and Moron adds: "The Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof" (Mormon ix: 34), referring to the Urim and Thummim or "Interpreters," as the Nephites call that instrument. It follows from this that neither Professor Anthon nor any one else could have confirmed the translation beyond perhaps saying that some one or more of the Egyptian characters which he recognized in the transcript had been assigned their true significance.

translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic, and he said that they were the true characters. He gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct. I took the certificate and put it into my pocket, and was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back, and asked me how the young man found out that there were gold plates in the place where he found them. I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him.

“He then said to me, ‘Let me see that certificate.’ I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying that there was no such thing now as ministering angels, and that if I would bring the plates to him, he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, ‘I cannot read a sealed book.’ I left him and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation.”^f

Some years after this, viz., in 1834, Professor Anthon, in a letter to Mr. E. D. Howe, of Painesville, Ohio, made a statement as to what took place on the occasion of Martin Harris’ visit to him, and I give that statement below. By way of introduction it should be said, however, that Mr. E. D. Howe at the time (1834) was connected with a Dr. Hurlburt in the production of an anti-Mormon book, and the report of Harris’ interview with the learned professor having become known, Mr. Howe wrote to Professor Anthon making inquiries about it, hoping, perhaps, that the fact of the interview might be denied. This is the letter he received in reply to his inquiries:

New York, February 17, 1834.

“Dear Sir: I received your letter of the 9th, and lose no time in making a reply. The whole story about my pronouncing the

^fHistory of the Church, Vol. I., p. 20.

Mormon inscription to be reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics is perfectly false. Some years ago, a plain, apparently simple hearted farmer called on me with a note from Dr. Mitchell, of our city, now dead, requesting me to decipher, if possible, the paper which the farmer would hand me. Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick—perhaps a hoax. When I asked the person who brought it how he obtained the writing, he gave me the following account: A gold book consisting of a number of plates, fastened together by wires of the same material, had been dug up in the northern part of the state of New York, and along with it an enormous pair of spectacles. These spectacles were so large that if a person attempted to look through them, his two eyes would look through one glass only the spectacles in question being altogether too large for the human face. “Whoever,” he said, “examined the plates through the glasses was enabled not only to read them, but fully to understand their meaning.” All this knowledge, however, was confined to a young man, who had the trunk containing the book and spectacles in his sole possession. This young man was placed behind a curtain in a garret in a farmhouse, and being thus concealed from view, he put on the spectacles occasionally or rather looked through one of the glasses, deciphered the characters in the book, and having committed some of them to paper, handed copies from behind the curtain to those who stood outside. Not a word was said about their being deciphered by the gift of God. Everything in this way was effected by the large pair of spectacles. The farmer added that he had been requested to contribute a sum of money toward the publication of the golden book, the contents of which would, as he was told, produce an entire change in the world, and save it from ruin. So urgent had been these solicitations, that he intended selling his farm and giving the amount to those who wished to publish the plates. As a last precautionary step, he had resolved to come to New York, and obtain the opinion of the learned about the meaning of the paper which he brought with him, and which had been given him as a part of the contents of the book although no translation had at that time been made by the young man with spectacles. On hearing this odd story, I changed my opinion about the paper, and instead of viewing it any longer as a hoax, I began to regard it as part of a scheme

to cheat the farmer of his money, and I communicated my suspicions to him to beware of rogues. He requested an opinion from me in writing, which, of course, I declined to give, and he then took his leave, taking his paper with him. This paper in question was, in fact, a singular scroll. It consisted of all kinds of singular characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets, Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes; Roman letters inverted or placed sideways were arranged and placed in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle, divided into various compartments, arched with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican calendar by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived. I am thus particular as to the contents of the paper, inasmuch as I have frequently conversed with friends on the subject since the Mormon excitement began, and well remember that the paper contained anything else but Egyptian hieroglyphics. Some time after, the farmer paid me a second visit. He brought with him the gold book in print, and offered it to me for sale. I declined purchasing. He then asked permission to leave the book with me for examination. I declined receiving it, although his manner was strangely urgent. I adverted once more to the roguery which, in my opinion, had been practiced upon him, and asked him what had become of the gold plates. He informed me they were in a trunk with the spectacles. I advised him to go to a magistrate and have the trunk examined. He said the curse of God would come upon him if he did. On my pressing him, however, to go to a magistrate, he told me he would open the trunk if I would take the curse of God upon myself. I replied that I would do so with the greatest willingness, and would incur every risk of that nature, provided I could only extricate him from the grasp of the rogues. He then left me. I have given you a full statement of all that I know respecting the origin of Mormonism and must beg of you as a personal favor, to publish this letter immediately, should you find my name mentioned again by these wretched fanatics.

Yours respectfully,

CHAS. ANTHON.

In addition to this acknowledgment of the visit of Martin Harris to him with the transcript of the Nephite characters, Professor Anthon subsequently made another acknowledgment of Martin Harris' visit in a letter written to Rev. T. W. Coit, in answer to a note of inquiry from that gentleman concerning the professor's connection with the Book of Mormon. The letter was published in the "Church Record," Vol. 1, No. 22; and is frequently quoted, in parts, at least, in various Anti-Mormon works. "The Church Record" was published in New York, I think; but not having access to that volume I am under the necessity of copying the parts of Anthon's second letter from anti-Mormon books. None of these anti-Mormon works publish the letter in full, and doubtless for the reason that in this second letter Mr. Anthon contradicts several statements that he makes in his letter to E. D. Howe. Following is his letter to Rev. Coit:

New York, April 3, 1841.

Rev. and Dear Sir: I have often heard that the Mormons claimed me for an auxiliary, but as no one until the present time has even requested from me a statement in writing, I have not deemed it worth while to say anything publicly on the subject. What I do know of the sect relates to some of the early movements; and as the facts may amuse you, while they will furnish a satisfactory answer to the charge of my being a Mormon proselyte, I proceed to lay them before you in detail.

Many years ago,—the precise date I do not now recollect,—a plain-looking countryman called upon me with a letter from Dr. Samuel L. Mitchell, requesting me to examine, and give my opinion upon a certain paper, marked with various characters, which the doctor confessed he could not decipher, and which the bearer of the note was very anxious to have explained. A very brief examination of the paper, convinced me that it was a mere hoax, and a very clumsy one too. The characters were arranged in columns, like the Chinese mode of writing, and pre-

sented the most singular medley that I ever beheld. Greek, Hebrew and all sorts of letters, more or less distorted, either through unskilfulness or from actual design, were intermingled with sundry delineations of half moons, stars, and other natural objects, and the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican zodiac. The conclusion was irresistible, that some cunning fellow had prepared the paper in question for the purpose of imposing upon the countryman, who brought it, and I told the man so without any hesitation. He then proceeded to give me the history of the whole affair, which convinced me that he had fallen into the hands of some sharper, while it left me in great astonishment at his simplicity. On my telling the bearer of the paper that an attempt had been made to impose on him and defraud him of his property, he requested me to give him my opinion in writing about the paper which he had shown to me. I did so without hesitation, partly for the man's sake, and partly to let the individual 'behind the curtain' see that his trick was discovered. The import of what I wrote was, as far as I can now recollect, simply this, that the marks in the paper appeared to be merely an imitation of various alphabetical characters, and had, in my opinion, no meaning at all connected with them. The countryman then took his leave, with many thanks, and with the express declaration that he would in no shape part with his farm, or embark in the speculation of printing the golden book.^g

The matter rested here for a considerable time, until one day, when I had ceased entirely to think of the countryman and his paper, he paid me a second visit. He now brought with him a duodecimo volume, which he said was a translation into English of the 'Golden Bible.' He also stated, that notwithstanding his original determination, he had been induced evidently to sell his farm, and apply the money to the publication of the book, and received the golden plates as a security for payment. He begged my acceptance of the volume, assuring me that it would be found extremely interesting, and that it was already "making

^gTo this point the Letter of Professor Anthon is copied from "Early Days of Mormonism," by J. H. Kennedy, Scribners & Sons, 1888, p. 268. The remainder of the letter is copied from Gregg's "Prophet of Palmyra," pp. 60-62.

great noise" in the upper part of the state. Suspecting now, that some serious trick was on foot, and that my plain-looking visitor might be in fact a very cunning fellow, I declined his present, and merely contented myself with a slight examination of the volume while he stood by. The more I declined receiving it, however, the more urgent the man became in offering the book until at last I told him plainly that if he left the volume, as he said he intended to do, I should most assuredly throw it after him as he departed. I then asked him how he could be so foolish as to sell his farm and engage in this affair; and requested him to tell me if the plates were really of gold. In answer to this latter inquiry, he said, that he had not seen the plates himself, which were carefully locked up in a trunk, but that he had the trunk in his possession. I advised him by all means to open the trunk and examine its contents, and if the plates proved to be of gold, which I did not believe at all, to sell them immediately. His reply was, that if he opened the trunk, the "curse of Heaven would descend upon him and his children. However," added he, "I will agree to open it, provided you take the 'curse of Heaven' upon yourself, for having advised me to the step." I told him I was perfectly willing to do so, and begged him to hasten home and examine the trunk, for he would find that he had been cheated. He promised to do as I recommended, and left me, taking his book with him. I have never seen him since.

Such is a plain statement of all I know respecting the Mormons. My impression now is, that the plain-looking countryman was none other than the Prophet Smith himself, who assumed an appearance of great simplicity in order to entrap me, if possible, into some recommendation of his book. That the Prophet aided me, by his inspiration, in interpreting the volume, is only one of the many amusing falsehoods which the Mormonites utter, relative to my participation in their doctrines. Of these doctrines I know nothing whatever, nor have I ever heard a single discourse from any of their preachers, although I have often felt a strong curiosity to become an auditor, since my friends tell me that they frequently name me in their sermons, and even go so far as to say that I am alluded to in the prophecies of scripture!

If what I have here written shall prove of any service in opening the eyes of some of their deluded followers to the real designs of those who profess to be the apostles of Mormonism, it will afford me satisfaction equalled, I have no doubt, only by that which yourself will feel on this subject.

I remain, very respectfully and truly,

Your friend,

CHAS. ANTHON.

Rev. Dr. T. W. Coit. New Rochelle, N. Y.^h

It will be observed that there is a discrepancy between the letter written by Professor Anthon to the Rev. Mr. Coit and the one he sent to E. D. Howe. In the latter he states that he refused to give his opinion in writing on the characters submitted to him; but in his letter to Rev. Coit he says that he gave a written opinion to Harris without hesitation and, to the effect that the marks on the paper appeared to be merely an imitation of various alphabetical characters that had no meaning at all connected with them. According to Martin Harris' statement he gave him a certificate to the effect that the characters submitted were genuine, and that the translation accompanying them was correct; but upon hearing that the existence of the Nephite plates was made known unto Joseph Smith by a heavenly messenger, he requested the return of the paper he had given Martin Harris, and he destroyed it, saying that the visitation of angels had ceased, etc., etc. I shall leave it for the anti-Mormon friends of Mr. Anthon to reconcile the contradiction that occurs in his statements, merely remarking that since the doctor in one letter declares that he refused to give Martin Harris a written opinion on the characters; and in the other that he gave him a written opinion, increases very much one's faith in Martin Harris' statement as against

^hProphet of Palmyra, (Gregg) pp. 60-62.

that of Professor Anthon's upon this point, namely, that the Professor gave Harris a written statement, but afterwards recalled and destroyed it. The reader should observe also that in his letter to Rev. Coit, written in 1841, the Professor says that no one until that time had ever requested from him a statement in writing on the subject of his connection with the Book of Mormon. Yet as a matter of fact E. D. Howe had addressed him a letter on the subject, asking him for a statement in 1834, to which request the professor responded, telling substantially the same story as in this letter to Rev. Coit, excepting as to the written opinion furnished to Harris. The contradictions in Anthon's letters leave him in a most unenviable situation; and doubtless accounts for anti-Mormons publishing extracts only from his letters.

The statements of Professor Anthon and Martin Harris are very contradictory, but the sequence will show that there is much that supports the statement of Martin Harris in the main as true while the anxiety of the professor to disconnect himself as far as possible from any association with "these wretched fanatics," will account for his version of the incident. The object of Mr. Harris in presenting these transcribed characters to the learned professor was, undoubtedly, to learn if they were true characters, or only the idle invention of Joseph Smith. That the answer of Professor Anthon and Dr. Mitchell was in favor of their being true characters is evidenced by the fact that Martin Harris returned immediately to Joseph Smith, in Harmony, made his report, and thence went to Palmyra, in New York, to arrange his business affairs that he might hasten back to Pennsylvania to become the amanuensis of the young Prophet in the work of translation. This Martin Harris would not likely have done if Professor Anthon's answer had been

what that gentleman represents it to have been in his letters to Mr. Howe and Rev. Coit; nor would Martin Harris have ventured, subsequently, to have furnished the money to pay for the publication of the first edition of the book, had he been assured by the professor that the whole thing was a "hoax" or a "scheme" to cheat him out of his money.

As stated above, Martin Harris returned to Palmyra after this interview with Professor Anthon, arranged his affairs, and joined the Prophet in Harmony about the 12th of April, 1828, when he commenced writing as Joseph translated. This work he continued until the 14th of June following—two months, by which time they had translated enough to make one hundred and sixteen pages of manuscript, of large sheets—usually called fool's cap paper.

Soon after Mr. Harris commenced to write for the Prophet he began to importune him for the privilege of showing so much of the translation as they had made to a number of his friends. This request the Prophet refused to grant. Nothing daunted by this refusal, Harris asked the Prophet to inquire of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim if he might not have that privilege. This Joseph did, and Harris' request was denied. He importuned him to ask again, with the like result, and yet again did he implore that the Prophet would ask the Lord for his permission. "After much solicitation," says the Prophet, in his account of this affair, "I again inquired of the Lord, and permission was granted him to have the writings on certain conditions, which were that he should show them only to his brother, Preserved Harris, his wife, his father and mother, and Mrs. Cobb, a sister of his wife. In accordance with this last answer, I required of him that he should bind himself in a covenant to me in the most solemn manner, that he would not do otherwise than he had been directed. He did so. He

bound himself as I required of him, took the writings, and went his way;”ⁱ and the Prophet took advantage of the absence of Harris, who had acted as his scribe, to visit his parents at Manchester.

The solemn engagement which Martin Harris made with the Prophet he broke. He showed the writings to other persons than those named in his agreement with the Prophet, and these stole the precious manuscript from him, and he was never able to recover it. This circumstance also went hard with Joseph as to his standing with the Lord. He had allowed himself to be over persuaded by the importunities of Martin Harris, and that after he had twice learned that it was not the will of the Lord that Harris should have the manuscript. He learned that Harris had lost the one hundred and sixteen pages of manuscript while he was yet in Manchester visiting with his parents; and immediately returned to Harmony, where he humbled himself in prayer before God that he might obtain forgiveness for his error; but apparently to no immediate purpose, for Moroni appeared to him and demanded the plates and also the Urim and Thummim. These were surrendered, with what anguish of soul one may readily understand. Exactly what length of time they were withheld from him cannot be determined, but evidently not long; for in July of the same year the angel guardian of the record Moroni, appeared to him again and presented the plates and Urim and Thummim to him. The Prophet, through the medium of the holy instrument, obtained the following revelation which bears the date of July, 1828:^j

“The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot

ⁱHistory of the Church, Vol. I., p. 21.

^jHistory of the Church, Vol. I., pp. 21, 22; also Doc. and Cov., sec. 3.

be frustrated, neither can they come to naught, for God doth not walk in crooked paths; neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; therefore his paths are straight and his course is one eternal round.

“Remember, remember, that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men for although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God, and follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him.

“Behold, you have been intrusted with these things, but how strict were your commandments; and remember also, the promises which were made to you, if you did not transgress them; and behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasion of men; behold, you should not have feared man more than God, although men set at naught the counsels of God, and despise his words, yet you should have been faithful, and he would have extended his arm, and supported you against all the fiery darts of the adversary, and he would have been with you in every time of trouble.

“Behold thou art Joseph, and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord, but because of transgression, if thou art not aware thou wilt fall, but remember, God is merciful, therefore, repent of that which thou hast done, which is contrary to the commandment which I gave you, and thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work; except thou do this, thou shalt be delivered up and become as other men, and have no more gift.

“And when thou deliveredst up that which God had given thee sight and power to translate thou deliveredst up that which was sacred into the hands of a wicked man, who has set at naught the counsel of God, and has broken the most sacred promises which were made before God, and has depended upon his own judgment and boasted in his own wisdom; and this is the reason that thou hast lost thy privileges for a season: for thou hast suffered the counsel of thy director to be trampled upon from the beginning. Nevertheless my work shall go forth; for inasmuch as the knowledge of a Savior has come unto the world, through the

testimony of the Jews, even so shall the knowledge of a Savior come unto my people, and to the Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites, and the Zoramites^k through the testimony of their fathers; and this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites, and the Ishmaelites, who dwindled in unbelief because of the iniquity of their fathers, whom the Lord has suffered to destroy their brethren, the Nephites, because of their iniquities and their abominations; and for this very purpose are these plates preserved which contain these records, that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people; and that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel, and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in his name; and that through their repentance they might be saved. Amen.”

The Prophet informs us that after receiving this revelation the Urim and Thummim and also the plates were taken from him; but in a few days they were returned to him whereupon he again inquired of the Lord and received the following very important revelation:^l

^kThe reader will of course understand that reference is here made to the descendants of these ancient American peoples.

^lThe revelation, here quoted, both in the History of Joseph Smith—Mill. Star, Vol. xiv. (Supplement) p. 8; also in the Doctrine and Covenants, (Sec. x.) bears the date of “May, 1829.” This date, however, must be wrong, because contradictory of the language of the prophet who in speaking of this revelation says that after the plates and Urim and Thummim were taken from him, after he had received the revelation dated July, 1828 (just quoted)—“In a few days they were returned to me, when I inquired of the Lord, and the Lord said thus to me.” Then follows the revelation, the date of which is under consideration. If the date of the revelation given July, 1828, in which the Prophet is reproved for importuning the Lord to allow Martin Harris to have one hundred and sixteen pages of translation from the Book of Mormon, is correct—then it could scarcely be said, in a few days the Urim and Thummim was returned to the Prophet; that he inquired and then received the revelation in question if that revelation was received in May, 1829. That would

Now, behold I say unto you, that because you delivered up those writings; which you had power given unto you to translate by the means of the Urim and Thummim, into the hands of a wicked man, you have lost them, and you also lost your gift at the same time, and your mind became darkened; nevertheless, it is now restored unto you again; therefore see that you are faithful and continue on unto the finishing of the remainder of the work of translation as you have begun. Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided to enable you to translate, but be diligent unto the end. Pray always that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work. Behold, they have sought to destroy you; yea, even the man in whom you have trusted has sought to destroy you. And for this cause I said that he is a wicked man, for he sought to take away the things wherewith you have been entrusted, and he has also sought to destroy your gift; and because you have delivered the writings into his hands, behold, wicked men have taken them from you; therefore you have delivered them up, yea, that which was sacred unto wickedness. And behold Satan hath put into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, which have gone out of your hands; and, behold, I say unto you, that because they have altered the words, they read contrary from that which you translated and caused to be written, and on this wise the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan that he may destroy this work for he hath put it into their hearts to do this, that by lying they may say they have caught you in the words which you have pretended to translate.

make nine or ten months' time between these two revelations instead of a few days. Moreover, the matter of the revelation is more in keeping with the events of a few days after July, 1828, than with May, 1829. Oliver Cowdery came to Joseph Smith on the 5th of April, 1829; and on the 7th began to assist him in the translation. This was before May, 1829, the alleged date of the revelation in question, and it is scarcely likely that the work of translation was resumed after the loss of the manuscript by Harris, before the revelation given informing the prophet of the intention of those who had stolen it. My conclusion is that the revelation erroneously dated May, 1829, was given "a few days after" the one bearing date of "July, 1828."

Verily, I say unto you, that I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing for, behold he has put it into their hearts to get thee to tempt the Lord thy God in asking to translate it over again; and then, behold they say and think in their hearts we will see if God has given him power to translate, if so, he will also give him power again; and if God giveth him power again, or if he translate again, or in other words, if he bringeth forth the same words, behold, we have the same with us and we have altered them, therefore they will not agree, and we will say that he has lied in his words, and that he has no gift and that he has no power: therefore we will destroy him and also the work, and we will do this that we may not be ashamed in the end, and that we may get glory of the world.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that Satan has great hold upon their hearts; he stirreth them up to iniquity against that which is good, and their hearts are corrupt and full of wickedness and abominations, and they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; therefore they will not ask for me. Satan stirreth them up that he may lead their souls to destruction; and thus he has laid a cunning plan thinking to destroy the work of God; but I will require this at their hands, and it shall turn to their shame and condemnation in the day of judgment. Yea, he stirreth up their hearts to anger against this work; yea, he saith unto them, Deceive, and lie in wait to catch that ye may destroy; behold this is no harm; and thus he flattereth them and telleth them that it is no sin to lie, that they may catch a man in a lie, that they may destroy him; and thus he flattereth them, and leadeth them along until he draggeth their souls down to hell; and thus he causeth them to catch themselves in their own snare; and thus he goeth up and down, to and fro in the earth, seeking to destroy the souls of men.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, wo be unto him that lieth to deceive, because he supposeth that another lieth to deceive, for such are not exempt from the justice of God.

Now, behold, they have altered these words, because Satan saith unto them, 'he hath deceived you;' and thus he flattereth them away to do iniquity, to get thee to tempt the Lord thy God.

Behold, I say unto you, that you shall not translate again those words which have gone forth out of your hands; for, behold, they shall not accomplish their evil designs in lying against those words. For, behold, if you should bring forth the same words they will say that you have lied, that you have pretended to translate, but that you have contradicted yourself, and, behold, they will publish this, and Satan will harden the hearts of the people to stir them up to anger against you, that they will not believe my words. Thus Satan thinketh to overpower your testimony in this generation, that the work may not come forth in this generation; but, behold here is wisdom, and because I show unto you wisdom and give you commandments concerning these things, what you shall do, show it not unto the world until you have accomplished the work of translation.

Marvel not that I say unto you, here is wisdom, show it not unto the world; for I said show it not unto the world that you may be preserved. Behold, I do not say that you shall not show it unto the righteous, but as you cannot always judge the righteous, or as you cannot always tell the wicked from the righteous, therefore I say unto you, hold your peace until I shall see fit to make all things known unto the world concerning the matter.

And now, verily I say unto you that an account of those things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands, are engraven upon the plates of Nephi; yea, and you remember it was said in those writings, that a more particular account was given of these things upon the plates of Nephi.

And now, because the account which is engraven upon the plates of Nephi is more particular concerning the things which in my wisdom I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account, therefore you shall translate the engravings which are on the plates of Nephi, down even till you come to the reign of King Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained; and, behold, you shall publish it as a record of Nephi, and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.

Behold, they have only got a part or an abridgment of the

account of Nephi. Behold, there are many things engraven on the plates of Nephi, which do throw greater views upon my gospel; therefore it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part of the engravings of Nephi, and send forth in this work. And, behold, all the remainder of this work does contain all those parts of my gospel which my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people. And I said unto them, that it should be granted unto them according to their faith in their prayers; yea, and this was their faith—that my gospel which I gave unto them that they might preach in their days, might come unto their brethren the Lamanites and also all that had become Lamanites because of their dissensions.

Now, this is not all; their faith in their prayers was, that this gospel should be made known also, if it were possible that other nations should possess this land; and thus they did leave a blessing upon this land in their prayers, that whosoever should believe in this gospel in this land might have eternal life; yea, that it might be free unto all of whatsoever nation, kindred, tongue or people they may be.

And now, behold, according to their faith in their prayers will I bring this part of my gospel to the knowledge of my people. Behold, I do not bring it to destroy that which they have received, but to build it up.

And for this cause I have said, if this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them. Now I do not say this to destroy my church, but I say this to build up my church; therefore, whosoever belongeth to my church need not fear, for such shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. But it is they who do not fear me, neither keep my commandments, but build up churches unto themselves to get gain; yea, and all those that do wickedly and build up the kingdom of the devil; yea, verily, verily, I say unto you, that it is they that I will disturb, and cause to tremble and shake to the center.

Behold I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God; I came unto my own and my own received me not. I am the light which shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not. I am he who said, "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold," unto my disciples, and many there were that understood me not.

And I will show unto this people that I had other sheep,

and that they were a branch of the house of Jacob. And I will bring to light their marvelous works which they did in my name; yea, and I will also bring to light my gospel which was ministered unto them; and, behold, they shall not deny that which you have received, but they shall build it up, and shall bring to light the true points of my doctrine, yea, and the only doctrine which is in me; and this I do that I may establish my gospel, that there may not be so much contention. Yea, Satan doth stir up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine, and in these things they do err, for they do wrest the scriptures, and do not understand them; therefore I will unfold unto them this great mystery; for, behold, I will gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they will not harden their hearts; yea, if they will come, they may, and partake of the waters of life freely.

Behold, this is my doctrine; whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church; whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me, therefore he is not of my church.

And now, behold, whosoever is of my church and endureth of my church to the end, him will I establish upon my rock and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

And now, remember the words of him who is the life and the light of the world, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Amen."

Encouraged to be moderate in his exertions at translating by the admonition in the foregoing revelation not to run faster, or labor more than he had strength and means provided to enable him to proceed, the Prophet did not immediately attempt to resume the work of translation, but worked upon a small farm which he had purchased of his wife's father.

As this episode of losing the one hundred and sixteen pages of manuscript, together with the loss for a season of the gift to translate, and being required to surrender all the sacred things which had been entrusted to his keeping, was

unquestionably a cause of deep sorrow to the young Prophet, so the restoration of the plates and Urim and Thummim to him must have been a joy unspeakable. How Martin Harris felt—what anguish of heart—what sense of chagrin, or how deeply he repented his folly is not recorded; but as he was not a man of keen sensibilities, it may be that his sufferings were not intense. At any rate we next hear of him in March, 1829, and he is still clamoring for a witness from the Lord that Joseph Smith had the plates, of which the Prophet had testified. The Prophet inquired of the Lord and obtained a revelation of which the following is the part that has reference to Martin Harris's request:

Behold, I say unto you, that as my servant Martin Harris has desired a witness at my hands, that you my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., have got the plates of which you have testified and borne record that you have received of me; and now behold this shall you say unto him, he who spake unto you, said unto you, I, the Lord, am God, and have given these things unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and have commanded you that you should stand as a witness of these things; and I have caused you, that you should enter into a covenant with me, that you should not show them except to those persons to whom I have commanded you, and you have no power over them except I grant it unto you. * * * Behold I say unto you, I have reserved those things which I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto future generations; but this generation shall have my word through you, and in addition to your testimony, the testimony of three of my servants, whom I shall call and ordain, unto whom I will show these things; and they shall go forth with my words that are given through you; they shall know of a surety that these things are true, for from heaven will I declare it unto them. I will give them power that they may behold and view these things as they are, and to none else will I grant this power to receive this same testimony among this generation, in this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my

church out of the wilderness. * * * And the testimony of three witnesses will I send forth of my word; and, behold, whosoever believeth on my words, them will I visit with the manifestations of my spirit, and they shall be born of me, even of water and of the spirit. * * * And their testimony shall also go forth unto the condemnation of this generation, if they harden their hearts against them; for a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out, from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away, and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming. Behold I tell you these things, even as I also told the people of the destruction of Jerusalem, and my word shall be verified at this time, as it hath hitherto been verified. * * *

* * * * And now, again I speak unto you my servant Joseph, concerning the man that desires the witness. Behold I say unto him, he exalts himself, and does not humble himself sufficiently before me; but if he will bow down before me, and humble himself in mighty prayer and faith, in the sincerity of his heart, then I will grant unto him a view of the things which he desires to see; and then he shall say unto the people of this generation, Behold, I have seen the things which the Lord has shown unto Joseph Smith, Jun., and I know of a surety that they are true, for I have seen them, for they have been shown unto me by the power of God and not of man. And I, the Lord command him, my servant Martin Harris, that he shall say no more unto them concerning these things, except he shall say, I have seen them, and they have been shown unto me by the power of God; and these are the words which he shall say. But if he deny this he will break the covenant which he has before covenanted with me, and, behold, he is condemned. And now except he humble himself, and acknowledge unto me the things that he has done which are wrong,^m and covenant with me that he will keep my commandments, and exercise faith in me, behold, I say unto him, he shall have no such views, for I will grant unto him no views of the things of which I have spoken, and if this be the case, I command you my servant Joseph, that you shall say unto

^mDoubtless an allusion to his breaking the covenant with Joseph respecting the manuscript which was lost.

him, that he shall do no more, nor trouble me any more concerning this matter. And if this be the case, behold I say unto thee, Joseph, when thou hast translated a few more pagesⁿ thou shalt stop for a season even until I command thee again: then thou mayest translate again: and except thou do this behold, thou shalt have no more gift, and I will take away the things which I have entrusted with thee. And now, because I foresee the lying in wait to destroy thee; yea, I foresee that if my servant Martin Harris humble not himself and receive a witness at my hand, that he will fall into transgression; and there are many that lie in wait to destroy thee from off the face of the earth; and for this cause, that thy days may be prolonged, I have given unto thee these commandments; yea, for this cause I have said, stop and stand still until I command thee, and I will provide means whereby thou mayest accomplish the thing which I have commanded thee; and if thou art faithful in keeping my commandments, thou shalt be lifted up at the last day. Amen.^o

It will be observed here that the language of this revelation takes on a sternness of tone and an independence in respect to Martin Harris and his future connection with the work that is suitable to the past conduct of that vacillating man; and in effect gives him sharply to understand that there must be repentance deep and sincere, and humiliation before God, or he may go his way and have no further lot nor part in the great work of the Lord then coming forth.

ⁿMost likely Emma Smith, the Prophet's wife, wrote for him during these days when he was evidently translating occasionally.

^oHistory of the Church, Vol. I, p. 28; also Doc. & Cov., Sec. v.